

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Shamrock Presentation Ceremony With
Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland
March 17, 2004

Taoiseach, thank you very much. Thanks for the lovely gift of shamrocks. It is a beautiful symbol of a beautiful land. Laura and I welcome you back to the White House. We're honored to have you join us to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day.

This day is always a happy one for Americans. In some places, Americans get a little too happy. [*Laughter*] Today we reaffirm the bonds of friendship between our countries. We remember a courageous man who preached a gospel of peace. We celebrate a heritage that is claimed by millions of my countrymen.

There's an Irish saying that there is luck in sharing. For more than two centuries, your country and mine have shared responsibilities. We've shared aspirations, and we have shared values. From my Nation's earliest days, Americans of Irish descent have helped to establish and define America's most cherished principles. They've helped to defend the liberty of their adopted homeland.

Today, the people of the United States and the people of Ireland continue to share so much. Our economies are more closely linked than ever. Together, we are fighting terrorism, a danger that has brought destruction and grief to Americans and Irish alike and to the world. I join the *Taoiseach* in sending condolences to the people of Spain as they remembered their murdered countrymen. I thank you for your strong support in our common struggle. Our nations are also standing for peace and justice in places like the Balkans and Afghanistan and beyond.

We share a common vision for Northern Ireland. We seek a lasting peace for the people of Northern Ireland, a peace that will allow people to live free of terror and intimidation. We seek a region that is stable and prosperous and tolerant and locally governed. I commend Prime Minister Ahern and Prime Minister Blair and all of those who are working so hard to implement the Good Friday Agreement. I call for a permanent end to all political violence. There's no place for paramilitaries in a democratic society.

The partnership of America and Ireland is close. It is lasting, and it is important to the peace of the world. I look forward this summer to visiting Ireland for the EU and U.S. Summit, to strengthen the essential partnership between the United States and Europe.

Taoiseach, may the friendship between your people and mine prove as strong in the years to come as it has in the centuries past. May all the people of our nations have a happy Saint Patrick's Day. We ask God's blessings on the people of Ireland, and may God continue to bless the United States. Welcome.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Ahern.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Assistance to
Azerbaijan
March 17, 2004

Dear _____ :

On December 30, 2003, I exercised my authority to extend the waiver of section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, concerning assistance to Azerbaijan. Consistent with paragraph (g)(6) of the heading “Assistance for the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union” in title II of the Kenneth M. Ludden Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, Fiscal Year 2002 (Public Law 107–115), I am providing the attached report prepared by my Administration concerning assistance provided pursuant to this waiver. The report describes the status of:

- All training and assistance provided to the Government of Azerbaijan pursuant to the extension of the waiver of section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act;

- The military balance between Azerbaijan and Armenia and the impact of U.S. assistance on that balance; and
- Negotiations for a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the impact of U.S. assistance on those negotiations.

My Administration remains fully committed to continue working with the Congress and all concerned parties to bolster peace, prosperity, and freedom in the South Caucasus.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Ted Stevens, chairman, and Robert C. Byrd, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations, and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, and David R. Obey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 18.

Remarks to Military Personnel at Fort Campbell, Kentucky
March 18, 2004

I'm glad to be back. Thanks for having me. Thanks for inviting Laura. I am proud to be here once again with the Screaming Eagles of the 101st, with the Green Berets of the 5th Special Forces Group, and with the Night Stalkers. Many of you have seen action in the global war on terror. Some of you have just returned to Fort Campbell from your deployments. Thank you for a job well done. Welcome home.

Laura and I are honored to be with all the personnel at Fort Campbell and with all the family members who live here. Each

one of you serves our Nation by giving your love and support to our soldiers. Here at one of America's vital military bases, you've built a strong community of people who care about each other and share the challenges and rewards of army life. America is grateful. America is proud of our military families.

All who serve at Fort Campbell and all who wear the uniform of the United States are serving at a crucial hour in the history of freedom. In the first war of the 21st